

ML BULLETIN

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THE MAGIC LANTERN SOCIETY: FIRST NATIONAL CONVENTION

By Leora Wood Wells

Based on notes from Joe and Alice Koch and other members

An exceptional cultural, educational and social experience.
Blanche E. Owens

An informative and rewarding experience.
Bob Gunshanan

Superbly done... The two days passed much too quickly.
Nancy Bergh

To say that we had an enjoyable time would be putting it
mildly. It is so nice to be with people with like interests.
Russ Atkinson

The First National Convention of the Magic Lantern Society of the United States and Canada was held August 21-22, 1981, in Rochester, New York. According to Chairman Joe Koch, 41 people attended, of whom 19 were or became members. Three members of the British Society attended and participated in the program.

Monroe Community College kindly provided space for the first day's activities. The George Eastman House International Museum of Photography hosted the second day's activities, which included a special exhibit of magic lanterns and related materials and a tour of the archives. The two-day program was developed by Society Member Ed Lennert and Society Chairman Joe Koch, while Larry Rakow organized and conducted the auction which attendees reported "was a highlight for all." The Lennerts also hosted a buffet at their home which provided an ideal opportunity for the participants to get to know each other.

Presentations during the convention ranged from illustrated lectures, films and magic lantern shows to informal discussions. They included the following:

Ed Lennert, "The Magic Lantern, Part II," film.

Jim Flanagan, "Early Forms of Lanterns and Illuminants."

Larry Rakow, "Types of Slides."

Al Simon, "Coming Attraction Slides."

John Jones, "Bamforth and the Victorian Tear-Jerkers."

Nancy Bergh, "Live Model Illustrated Song Slides." Slide show with taped music and informal audience sing-along.

Ed Lennert, "S.F. Spira's Show on Animation." Film with taped narrative.

Joe Koch and Dick Balzer, "Putting on a Show."

John Jones, "Origin and Dating of Slides" through analysis of clothing and hair styles and political and other historic events represented on the slides.

Dennis Crompton, "Magic Lantern Slides in Their Social Context." This included a splendid "reading" written to accompany one of the Temperance shows so widely used during the late Nineteenth Century.

Open Discussion, "Preservation and Restoration of Lanterns and Slides."

Joe Koch, "The Magic Lantern Society: Present Status and Future Plans."

Because some members have felt the need for pricing guidelines when they are purchasing magic lanterns, slides or literature, or selling items from their collections, a "pricing" activity was scheduled as a special feature of the convention. Each attendee was given a diagram of all Magic Lantern items in the display cases and a correlated sheet on which to indicate his estimate of the monetary value and interest level of each. These sheets were turned over to Ed Lennert to be analyzed.

The Auction--and the auctioneer--received special praise from some of the attendees who sent critiques of the convention.

The auction was a great feature. I guess the quantity offered was a surprise to everyone. The auctioneer did a fantastic job.

Bob Gunshanan

I want to tell you how excellent was the performance of Larry Rakow at the auction. He conducted it with dignity and poise and also we discovered that he has an excellent "singing voice." Most of all, I am so happy with the old lantern slide projector with BIG BRASS LENS unit that I bought.

Russ Atkinson

This event also proved to be a moneymaker for the Society. One hundred ninety-one lots were offered, of which 71 sold for \$1235.00, yielding a profit of \$115.00 to the Society.

Surprisingly, the convention as a whole also made a profit. Gross income was \$317 from the auction profit and registration fees. Expenses for food, beverages, postage and insurance totaled \$109.10, leaving a net profit of \$207.90. This has been deposited in the Valley Bank of Auburn, Washington, and will be used to defray Society expenses, of which production and mailing of the Bulletin are the major items.

Reaction to the presentations and to the program as a whole was highly favorable.

Wanda and I want everyone to know how much we appreciate the work and efforts of Joe Koch and Ed Lennert. They put together a fine convention.

Russ Atkinson

The presentations were excellent...and pricked my interest in doing more research. It was a pleasure to have the English Society members. They gave us many insights regarding magic lanterns and slides we would not have had otherwise...The exhibit of lanterns and slides was "out of this world." I want to thank all who were responsible for the convention, and particularly would like to propose a resolution commending Ed Lennert and his wife for the admirable job they did.

Blance E. Owens

I really enjoyed the two days of programs and learned something new from almost all of them. Margaret and Mother really got caught up in it--you know how these studies involve the whole family--and enjoyed themselves thoroughly. I was really impressed with the results of all the hard work Joe and Ed had put in on organizing the program, and that exhibit at Eastman House which Ed put together was superbly done...Congratulations on a very successful first convention. I hope we can do it again.

Nancy Bergh

What several of the participants seem to have valued the most was the person-to-person contact with other lantern enthusiasts.

It was interesting to listen to so many of you who are either active lanternists or who collect the large lanterns, which have not been our field. (We collect children's lanterns and slides.)

Bob Gunshanan

Perhaps most important was getting together with people with whom I had corresponded, read about, and had a like interest. Their philosophies, suggestions and knowledge concerning magic lanterns were invaluable to me. What nice people they are!

Blanche E. Owens

For some of the attendees--and some members who were not able to attend--the rosy glow carried on after the convention was over.

Immediately after the convention, we made our way over to Williamstown, Massachusetts to visit David and Dixie Brooke. We found that David and Barbara Henry had had the same idea, so we had another mini-convention there. It was great fun!

Nancy Bergh

David Brooke, who had unexpectedly been unable to attend the convention, reports that other attendees, John Jones and his family, also found their way to his place.

Prize for the most dedicated Society member must surely go to Dick Balzer. According to Joe Koch, Dick left his wife and one-day-old son to make his presentation at the convention. This, Joe says, deserves a special vote of thanks--to MRS. Balzer.

PHANTASMAGORIA: THE ENDURING VIEW

By Robert H. Woodward

In an article in the April 1981 ML Bulletin, "The Magic Lantern and the Passing Show," Bulletin Editor Leora Wood Wells gives a number of examples from 19th-Century literature to suggest the dual ways in which magic lanterns have been alluded to by writers. To some writers, the images projected upon a screen, like fiction, "often reveal," as Mrs. Wells states, "human character at a deeper level of truth than the mundane encounters of real life...." To others, the images represent "phantasmagoria," suggesting a fantastic, unreal representation of actuality or reality, something, as Carl Jung wrote, to be stripped away so that some ultimate reality could be perceived.

This last image is, curiously, a famous metaphor that bears a remarkable similarity to the construction of a magic lantern. Plato used it in The Republic, Book VII, to explain the unenlightened vision of mankind when it is not exposed to the light of God. "Behold!" he wrote,

human beings living in an underground den, which has a mouth open towards the light and reaching all along the den; here they have been from their childhood, and have their legs and necks chained so that they cannot move, and can only see before them, being prevented by the chains from turning round their heads. Above and behind them a fire is blazing at a distance, and between the fire and the prisoners there is a raised way; and you will see, if you look, a low wall built along the way, like the screen which marionette players have in front of them, over which they show the puppets. (Jowett translation).

The light from the fire and from the opening of the den projects onto the wall the shadows of human figures passing along the wall. The prisoners, who have seen nothing ever but these shadows, assume them to be real: "The prisoners would mistake the shadows for realities." Plato carries his metaphor to great length to describe the pain of turning from the shadows to the light of the sun and thereby learning of the true reality, but the basic metaphor clearly anticipates the magic lantern structure of a posterior light projecting onto a wall a representation that is not, but may be mistaken for, reality.

Magic lanternists can thus point with pride to the fact that the founder of the philosophic idealism on which much of the most important thought in Western civilization is based used a magic lantern analogy to explain the difference between shadow and substance, fable and reality.

Nathaniel Hawthorne, the 19th-Century American writer who explored the themes of truth and illusion from a moral perspective, however, reversed the elements. For him, the projected vision gave hints of a truth that actuality--or the workaday world--could not guess. In a moral tale entitled "Fancy's Show Box," first published in 1837, he creates the situation of a venerable gentleman, a Mr. Smith, "long regarded as a pattern of moral excellence," being visited by Fancy, Memory, and Conscience as he sits alone, luxuriating in the comfort of his armchair and his thoughts of a long life well spent and enjoying a glass of old Madeira. In the garb of "an itinerant showman, with a box of pictures on her back," Fancy reveals to Mr. Smith a number of pictures that, through the help of Memory, bring back to the unstained old gentleman reminders of several evil thoughts and actions from his past--a lustful glance at a maiden he once knew, a bottle thrown in anger at a friend,

a temptation to sue three orphans for a sum of money to which he might have made claim. Though he did not ruin the maiden, injure his friend, or carry out his suit, Conscience stabs him bitterly as Memory turns back the pages of his life to recall to him the basis for the scenes in Fancy's show box in which the possible tragic effects of the actions or thoughts are portrayed. The scenes have a reality of their own, even though they never transpired, and the stainless gentleman realizes the blots upon his soul. "Man must not disclaim his brotherhood, even with the guiltiest," Hawthorne moralizes, "since, though his hand be clean, his heart has surely been polluted by the flitting phantoms of iniquity."

Hawthorne's writings abound in optical imagery--reflections in armor and mirrors, perceptions distorted by frosted glass, stained glass windows, and magnifying glasses--but in "Fancy's Show Box" and in "Ethan Brand," (which I referred to in "The Magic Lantern in American Literature," ML Bulletin, January 1981) he employs optical instruments and pictures, though not actual magic lanterns, to dramatize his moral message that truth is other than what the unaided eye can perceive.

A modern example of a magic lantern reference in literature to call up images of the passing show occurs in the final paragraph of John Hersey's novel, A Single Pebble (1956). This is the story of a young, inexperienced American engineer assigned to go up the great Yangtse River by junk to study the possibilities of creating hydraulic power by damming the famous gorges of the river. During his travel upriver from Ichang he learns many lessons about life and himself, primarily through his relationship with the remarkable and mystifying head tracker, named Old Pebble, who dies in carrying out his hazardous duties in guiding and pulling the junk through the treacherous gorges. At the end of his journey, the young engineer reflects upon his experiences. Outside his room in the city of Wanhhsien he hears the "buzz of the citizens...through the paper-paned window of my room:"

I heard an itinerant story-teller pass by with a crude shadow-scope, a kind of stereopticon that I had seen in towns downriver, and I heard him wail out his advertisements of famous things to be heard and seen at the modest charge of one round copper coin.

This sentence implicitly contrasts the inferiority of "famous things" to be seen for a coin with the greater truths he has witnessed in the behavior and character of Old Pebble. Unlike Hawthorne, Hersey finds actuality the source of truth, the pictures merely a shadow.

The 19th-Century magic lantern show, called a phantasmagoria or phantasmagory, has bequeathed its name to the 20th-Century, when it usually suggests the fantastic or unreal. And it still has literary applications. Two popular writers of the eerie and supernatural, Stephen King (The Shining and Carrie) and Peter Straub (Shadowland and Ghost Story) are now collaborating on a book. According to King, he had a spooky dream and related it to Straub. "What followed," he says, "was a phantasmagorical conversation which turned into the outline for a book."

From the shadows of Plato to the dreams of Stephen King, phantasmagoria, whether truth or illusion, are an enduring facet of human perception.

THE DOUGLASS LIGHT COMPANY: MAGIC LANTERN MAKERS

By Joe and Alice Koch

About a year ago, when Alice and I were putting on a magic lantern show for a local retirement home, a lady in her 80's approached us. Her name, she said, was Lydia Rauch Young. Right after her high school graduation in 1916, she had gone to work for the Douglass Light Company, located at First and Virginia Streets in Seattle. This was a small family business, and Lydia was the only employee who was not a member of the family. Her job was to hand-color black and white slides, tend to in-store sales, make up mail order shipments, assemble rental slide sets for churches, clubs, schools and home use. Her salary was \$1 per day plus room and board. She remained for 12 years until her marriage to Gordon Young.

The Douglass Light Company was founded in 1904 by three brothers, A.J., J.C. and Bert Douglass, who had just returned from Alaska where they had conducted a thriving business selling supplies to gold miners. Initially, their Seattle business was limited to providing electrical supplies and gas fixtures to local builders, but the brothers--always alert to lucrative business opportunities--saw the potential profits in the magic lantern business. Each had some special qualifications for this. One was a Baptist minister who was familiar with the use of magic lanterns in churches. Another was an optician. The third, Bert, was a versatile jack-of-all-trades who worked in the shop as a sheet metal man, electrician, gas fitter, photographer, salesman and general manager.

About 1908, the brothers began producing magic lanterns and slides. All metal lantern parts were made in the shop. Lenses were purchased from Bausch & Lomb of Rochester, New York. Carbide for acetyline gas was purchased from a supply house in Buffalo, New York, and projector bulbs for electric lanterns from General Electric.

Black and white photographic slides were purchased from suppliers in New York, Philadelphia and Chicago. Plain glass for the scenes photographed by Bert Douglass was purchased from Lowman and Hanford, a local stationery shop, as were the water-color and oil paints Lydia used to color the slides. All of the photographic work including developing, making positives for the slides, and mounting was done in the shop.

Lydia did the color work over a light box of frosted glass, aided by an overhead light and a magnifying glass mounted on a swivel which could be moved to any convenient position over the slide. Some of the fine detail work had to be applied with a single hair from a paint brush.

Some of the slides made by Bert Douglass were specially commissioned, such as merchants' advertisements and political promotional materials to be shown in local theaters and at political rallies. Fraternal organizations, churches and even some wealthy families also commissioned special made-to-order sets. The shop did not produce or handle mechanical slides of any kind.

Slide rentals were lucrative for the shop. Sets rented for \$1-\$1.50 for a two-week period. The price depended upon the number of slides, the subject matter and whether they were black and white or colored.

Romance blossomed in the Douglass Light Company when a personable fellow named Gordon Young took to hanging around the shop. In order to be near Lydia, he often

pitched in to help get out rush orders. By the time Lydia left the shop to marry Gordon in 1928, radio and talking pictures were supplanting magic lantern shows as popular entertainments. The Douglasses discontinued their magic lantern business in the early 1930's, but continued their electrical business until 1947.

Editor's Note: Two things strike me about this interview--the remarkable amount of detail provided by Mrs. Young and Joe's skill in getting down so many pertinent facts. Their combined efforts have produced a most valuable documentation of the way some magic lantern and slide makers functioned. If any of the rest of you have similar sources of first-person information about any phase of magic lantern manufacture or use, please get it down on paper while it is still obtainable and share it with us through the Bulletin.

MAGIC LANTERNS IN BRITISH MUSEUMS

By Leora Wood Wells

Magic lanterns were not, if you'll pardon the pun, the focus of our three-week trip to England and Wales this past August, but we automatically zoomed in on them whenever we found them in some of the many museums we visited. This is by no means a complete list, since time did not permit us to visit such major collections as the Kodak Museum in London, the home of pioneer photographer Fox Talbot in Lacock Abbey, the Royal Photographic Society in Bath, or even the small display at the Independent Broadcasting Authority which we saw in 1975.

Unfortunately, we also missed out on seeing Doug and Anita Lear's Narrowboat Magic Lantern Show, as they were on summer tour while we were in London. We picked up a folder for a Victorian Magic Lantern Show at Goldsithney, Cornwall, but had no time to check it out. We had also gone armed with a list of members of the British Magic Lantern Society, hoping to have time to meet at least one or two of them, but alas, this too had to be eliminated in order to include such top priorities of ourselves and our son as Darwin's house in Downe; South Wales, with its incredible castles and scenery; and the Yorkshire Moors where the ghosts of Heathcliff and Cathy walk among the heather--in full bloom, a heavenly purple carpet, when we were there. But here are the magic lantern exhibits we did see:

The Science Museum, London. To our delight, we found that this museum has mounted a very large exhibit on "Photography and Cinematography--A Hundred and Fifty Years of Images" since we were last there. It has a marvelous collection of magic lanterns and slides of many types, phantasmagoria outfits, cameras obscura, thaumatropes, kaleidotropes, stroboscopes, phenakistoscopes, praxinoscopes, mutoscopes, dozens of incredible animating machines from around the turn of the century.

Unfortunately, as in the earlier small exhibit still on view in an adjacent hall, the copy for this one abounds in factual errors. Even more unfortunately, the mechanized exhibits are not kept in good operating order. Dissolving views are out of sequence so they do not convey the principle they are meant to illustrate. The motors on the persistence of vision devices rotate too slowly to give the illusion of motion. Some push-button devices don't work at all. Being, ourselves, in the museum business, we are well aware of the difficulty of keeping mechanical exhibits functioning properly, but a good, solid half-day's work would iron out most of the bugs in this one.

NOTES FROM HERE AND THERE: THE EDITOR'S SCRAPBOOK

°Howzatagin? Dipping into an old file of M.L. items, I came across one from an October 1967 issue of the Charlotte, North Carolina Observer. It was a story on Julie Andrews and the popularity of "The Sound of Music," at that time the most successful movie ever made. It had, the UPI story said, "surpassed 'Gone With the Wind' and all the other films made since Edison invented the magic lantern." Well, now, we've heard a lot of theories about who invented the lantern, but that's a new one!

°Magic Lanterns a la Rothschild. How many of you caught a fleeting glimpse of an itinerant showman iwht a lantern on his back on the NBC News story on the House of Rothschild banking family on November 12? Our son, who sees the NBC News at 6:30 in Connecticut, phoned us from there so we could catch it on the News, which comes on at 7:00 p.m. in our area. Oddly enough, the engraving was used to illustrate a point about the Rothschilds having started out as junk dealers. Somebody in NBC's research department must have goofed.

°Beauty Is In the Eye of the Beholder. Remember President Johnson's famous remark that the Hurd portrait of him was the ugliest thing he had ever seen? Back in the 1840's, a Congressman had a more colorful reaction to the Horatio Greenough statue of George Washington portrayed in heroic style, clad only in classic Roman draperies. It was, the Congressman said, "the most horrid phantasmagoria I have ever seen." Members who wish to judge for themselves whether the description fits may visit this now-famous statue in the Smithsonian Institution's Museum of American History in Washington, D.C.

°Election of Officers. Joe indicates this will be held in January. Since the By-Laws provide no mechanism for nominations, (see July 1981 Bulletin), I'm not sure how this is to be accomplished, but I, for one, hope Joe and Alice will continue in their present positions for another year or so. They've done a magnificent job of getting the organization started and holding it together through its childhood illnesses, and I'd welcome their continued leadership. If that's a nomination, fine! Bob Gunshanan expressed a similar point of view: "As for the formalities of an election, I am well satisfied with our officers and I hope they will stay in place. You've got my vote, indefinitely."

°Back in Focus: the Old Projectionist. You'll all be glad to know Bob Bishop was able to resume his magic lantern shows after his thumb healed up, even though he was not able to attend the convention. Following a Nineteenth Century tradition, he gave one of his shows to an audience of campers at a State park under a starry sky. An earlier series of programs presented at the Northwest Film Study Center in Portland, Oregon, drew good newspaper and TV coverage and full houses. Bob reports he and Carm were held over for an hour each day answering questions from film makers, teachers and other lovers of old philosophical toys. Portland, Bob says, is "a hotbed of interest" in these devices and has a "Zoetrope Collective." He was happy to learn that teachers are using some of the old devices as they were used in earlier centuries, to teach principles of optics and animation.

Counterbalancing this disappointment is the fact that the collection itself is superb. One neat item is a reproduction of a huge 1885 Marey zoetrope made to illustrate the flight of birds. Instead of paper strips inside, it has models of pigeons in several flight positions, based on Etienne Jules Marey's famous photo series taken with his revolving photographic gun. The effect is uncanny.

Also on display is the largest slide we've ever seen. The wooden frame appears to be about 12 x 30". The image portion measures about 8 x 116". Crank-operated, the slide shows moving ships.

The Oxford Museum, Oxford. This museum is devoted entirely to the history of the City of Oxford, but it has one magic lantern item. An 1865 satirical poster deals with a Town and Gown controversy over the building of the Great Western Carriage Works. Apparently the town wanted it for economic reasons. The university thought an industry of this type inappropriate for a quiet, scholarly setting and preferred to see the space reserved for expansion of the university. The poster shows each "act" of this "drama" as if it were a magic lantern slide. The caption for the last "scene" reads, "General Joy! In the midst of which PROFESSOR SMITH leaves Oxford in a DISSOLVING VIEW! and Oxford appears with New and Handsome Architectural Buildings."

The History of Science Museum, Oxford. The magic lantern display in this museum is small but has some choice items. As in the Science Museum in London, the labels are a fund of misinformation. In addition to a couple of magic lanterns, there are several early cinema projectors, a phantoscope, a zoetrope, an incomplete praxinoscope, two peep eggs and a peepshow of the Thames tunnel, and several stereo viewers. The most interesting items are motion slides of the universe and snow flakes, a choreutoscope dancing skeleton slide which uses a Maltese cross mechanism to activate the motion, and several nice chromatropes.

The Castle Museum, York. Best known for its very effective "streets" of authentic old shop fronts with appropriate artifacts, this museum has two magic lanterns on display. A small black one featuring a gold colored "fence" around the top is in the display of children's toys. The other, a big shiny, squarish one, is in a display with other optical instruments, including a zoetrope and two types of stereo viewers.

The Barnes Museum of Cinematography, St. Ives, Cornwall. Dick Balzer's article in the July 1981 issue of the Bulletin had made it sound so easy to pop down to St. Ives and back by overnight sleeper train, and Stephen Chamberlain's description in the April 1980 issue had so whetted our eager appetites that we resolved, this time, to see it regardless of how tight our schedule was. Of the train trip, I'll say little except that Dick's description hadn't prepared us for the fact that there would be no food or drinking water at all on the train, that the toilet facilities in our cramped compartment would consist of an old-fashioned chamber pot, or that the train would be apt to arrive several hours late. Nor did British Tourist Authority representatives we consulted in New York, London and Bristol prepare us for the near-impossibility of engaging lodgings for a single night. St. Ives is a rootin' tootin' tourist town full of roaring traffic, interesting crafts centers and bad souvenir shops, and rooms are generally let for a minimum of two weeks. After we had tried four places without success, the kind-hearted proprietor of a very pleasant Bed and Breakfast establishment finally took pity on us and arranged a place for us to stay. But be forewarned if you make a similar pilgrimage, and avoid our pitfalls.

Despite this, our visit to St. Ives was one of the high points of our trip for two very different reasons. One, obviously, was the excitement of seeing this famous collection and getting acquainted with the Barnes brothers. The other, of which we had no prior inkling, was that St. Ives has what must surely be some of the most beautiful scenery in the world. Intrigued by a pretty little chapel on the top of a steep hill, we climbed up and found ourselves overlooking a spectacular panoramic view of a coastline that seems a hybrid of a rocky Maine coast and three separate sandy beaches with the jade green water color one associates with the Mediterranean. We could see why most people stay at least a couple of weeks.

By now all of you know from the previous articles what the Barnes collection contains, so I won't repeat the information here. We spent several hours browsing through the exhibits, triumphantly identifying lanterns that were twins of ones in our collection, looking longingly at ones we don't have, marveling over the first edition copies of all the key works on magic lanterns from Kircher on. One favorite item we had never seen pictured was a small porcelain statue of an itinerant showman with his lantern on his back.

Because our schedule had been too uncertain for us to let the Barnes know we were coming, their other commitments precluded our making the visits to the archives and storerooms that Steve and Dick had enjoyed so much, but we did have the pleasure of talking not only with the Barnes brothers and John's wife, Carmen, but also with their look-alike sister, repatriated to England after having lived in Texas.

John told us that he and Bill have been interested in cinema since they were eleven years old, and they started collecting in 1939 when they found an old projector in the junk heap of an antique dealer above whose shop they had their studio. Both had studied cinematography, and Bill became a cinematographer, while John became a designer of movie sets. Because the British film industry was in a slump after World War II, John did not return to that field after his wartime stint in the Navy, electing instead, to open an old book shop in St. Ives which specialized in books on the cinema and magic lanterns. At this time, their mailing list had worldwide circulation. However, book sources in this highly specialized field eventually dried up and postage costs rose astronomically, so John decided to devote full time to the museum and to research and writing. Currently, he is working on a five-volume history of cinematography. The first volume, The Beginnings of the Cinema in England, was published in 1976. (Barnes and Noble Books, New York, distributed the American edition.)

Bill is the proprietor of an antique shop on Kings Road in the Chelsea section of London which is guaranteed to drive any magic lantern collector out of his mind with desire. Bill finds the treasures offered there mostly at auctions. He was amused by my tale of our visit to the shop in 1975. During conversation with a man who was tending the shop, we mentioned that we had very much wanted to see the Barnes Museum in St. Ives, but that our tight schedule wouldn't permit it. "Well, it's closed now anyhow," he said, (this was in January) "but John would probably open it up for you." As we left, he handed us his card, which I put in my purse without looking at it. Some weeks after I had returned to the United States, I happened to pull it out of my purse and learned, to my utter astonishment, that our pleasant but unknown informant had been none other than William Barnes himself.

Eventually, the Barnes brothers hope to get financial backing to move the museum closer to London and expand its size. Only a fraction of their collection is now on view. Even the lantern that John considers probably the most valuable of all--a big, clumsy machine circa 1790--is hidden away for lack of space.

Although the Barnes claim their main interest is the history of the cinema rather than magic lanterns as such, the quality of their collection, the level of their knowledge and interest, and the responsive friendliness of their personalities, make a visit to their museum a choice experience for any magic lantern buff. As a gesture of international goodwill, John presented us with one of his few remaining copies of the catalogue of their collection, inscribed "To the Magic Lantern Society of the United States and Canada with the Author's Compliments." This immensely informative document will be reviewed in a future issue of the Bulletin.

MAYBE, JUST MAYBE

By Joseph Kloss

I would like to add a footnote to Leora Wells' interesting article, "Addendum: The Magic Lantern and the Passing Show," published in the July 1981 Bulletin. As she indicated, the term "magic lantern" has been thoroughly kicked around and sometimes used incorrectly.

Whenever I travel, I stop and visit almost every antique shop on my route in the hope of finding an old magic lantern for my collection. However, I have discovered that when I inquire about magic lanterns, at least fifty percent of the people I ask do not know what a magic lantern is. But once upon a time, not so long ago, I thought perhaps my luck had changed.

I wandered into a small, picturesque antique shop in Memphis, Tennessee. The shop was tended by a very pretty lady--in fact, so pretty that her welcoming smile actually took my breath away. I breathed in a fresh supply of oxygen, smiled in return, and told her I collected magic lanterns.

"Magic lanterns," she said, and hesitated a moment.

So I quickly asked her if she knew what a magic lantern was.

The lady's blue eyes sparkled as she answered, "I most certainly do. I have a very beautiful one, and it's made of solid brass. Just wait 'til you see it!" (The words were spoken slowly, with a soft, delightful Southern accent.)

I thought, yes, Ma'am, I can hardly wait, and I took another deep breath.

She left the room; then, in a few moments returned and placed in my eagerly waiting hands--a replica of Aladdin's Magic Lamp.

Surprised and disappointed, I stared at the lamp. It certainly was beautiful. It had very graceful lines, fine detail, and a highly polished surface.

Carefully, I set it down; then turned toward the young lady.

She had a confident, "I told you so" expression on her pretty face, and her eyes still sparkled.

I opened my mouth to speak, but no sound came out--because I had made a sudden decision. I just could not tell this sweet person that her mystical lamp was not

a magic lantern. And furthermore, I would not disturb her fantasy with a mundane explanation of OUR kind of magic lanterns.

So I thanked the pretty lady and told her I would think about the "lantern"-- then walked out of the shop, mumbling to myself.

And now, as I write this, I AM thinking about the Aladdin's lamp and wishing I had bought it--because maybe, just maybe, it WAS a "Magic Lantern." After all, the pretty lady in the shop DID look like a beautiful princess!

BOOKS OLD AND NEW

The Birth of Photography, The Story of the Formative Years 1800-1900, Brian Coe, Taplinger Publishing Co., NY, 1977. Although only 140 pages long- this book contains a wealth of information on the pioneers of photography and the processes they developed, and also includes more than 200 photographs, many of them previously unpublished. The author deals only briefly with development of the processes that made production of photographic lantern slides possible, but does include one interesting tidbit on the use of magic lanterns during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71. It seems that important war information was photographically reduced onto small collodian pellicles which were rolled up and inserted into quill containers attached to carrier pigeons. The birds flew over the enemy lines and delivered their messages, which were then projected by magic lantern onto screens as a basis for further strategic planning. Coe, Curator of the Kodak Museum in London, is also the author of George Eastman and the Early Photographers and narrator of a BBC-TV documentary series on Pioneers of Photography.

Optical Projection, Lewis Wright, 1891. Triumphantly, we reached for this important work, long the standard in its field, on the shelves of Piccadilly Rare Books Ltd., 30 Sackville Street, London W1X1DB. It didn't take us long to put it back. At L30 (about \$60 at the time we were there in August, 1981), it cost more than we cared to pay, even though this copy once belonged to the Philosophical Society of Glasgow. The book is a treatise on the use of the lantern in exhibitions and scientific demonstrations using projecting microscopes and the like. In the preface, Wright tells how he became interested in magic lanterns:

About the year 1851, there was placed at my disposal a Lantern of a character very unusual (at that time) for a boy of my age to possess a share in; in fact, it was one of Carpenter and Wesley's "Phantasmagoria" lanterns, unrivalled in that period of transparent sheets and sperm oil. The result was that Optical Projection, in its various forms, has been, with me, more or less a hobby ever since.

KOCH'S CORNER: THE CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

- °First National Convention. I want to thank the Lennerts and Larry Rakow for their contributions to making our First National Convention such a success. The Friday evening buffet at the Lennerts was outstanding, and we appreciated their hospitality. I also want to thank all who attended, with double gratitude for those who participated in the program. Our British members who came such a great distance to attend deserve a very hearty thank you. This was an occasion a lot of us have been looking forward to for a long time, and it more than met our expectations.
- °Second National Convention. It is not too early to start planning for our next convention. A number of suggestions have been made, among them that the next major convention might be sponsored by the British Society. In this country, Minneapolis, where our able member Nancy Bergh lives, and somewhere in the Northwest, where quite a cluster of our members live, have been suggested. Let us hear any ideas you have. In the meantime, I encourage you to establish regional groups as we have done in the Northwest. All of us have found these meetings most enjoyable.
- °Election of Officers. This will be held in January. Please send your nominations to the Secretary, post haste!!
- °Membership Status. Four new members joined during the convention, and another has joined since then--Bob Woodward, who has already contributed two excellent articles to the Bulletin. We welcome all of them. An updated membership list will be issued in January.
- °Long-Delayed Get-Together. As you know from Leora's article on "Magic Lanterns in British Museums," Willeroy and Leora Wells were unable to attend the convention because they were in England at the time. The day after Labor Day, just a few days after their return, Alice and I finally got to meet our Editor and have a face to go with all the words we have exchanged by mail and telephone. We spent a delightful afternoon visiting with the Wells in the Springfield, Virginia, home and had a look at their handsome collection, including the "Golden Calf" a vertical biunial in mint condition.
- °Reproduction ML Slides. A company called Blackhawk, at Box 3990, 1235 West 5th Street, Davenport, Iowa 52802, has issued a line of slides reproduced from old stereopticon slides. The sets range from 17-36 slides and cost between \$5 and \$9. They include intermission and advertising slides such as "One Moment Please," "Don't Spit on the Floor," and "Remember -- There Are Ladies Present."
- °ML Show on a Canal Barge. The Liberty Eatery and Antique Emporium in Whitehall, New York, offers fine food, lodging and "historical gems of a hundred years ago." Eastman House says this is the largest collection of professional lantern slides in the United States. Write Katherine Leddick, proprietor, 16 North William Street for information about the programs and schedules. Katherine became a member in Rochester!

CAN YOU TELL ME? -- QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT MAGIC LANTERNS

Q: My collaborator, Joe Eckhardt, and I are researching for a book on the Lubin Company of Philadelphia, one of the earliest film production companies. Other Lubin studios were located in Jacksonville, Florida; Newport, Rhode Island; San Antonio, Texas; and San Diego, Coronado and Los Angeles, California. Lubin also made illustrated song slides (as early as 1896), stereoscope slides, eyeglasses and lenses, movie cameras, projectors and the like. We are looking for posters, advertisements, production stills, postcard photos of stars of the Lubin studios, etc. The Lubin material often bears his trademark, a Liberty Bell with the Lubin name enclosed in a circle. We would appreciate hearing from any members of the Magic Lantern Society who can supply any information about Lubin or has any Lubin equipment or slides.

Linda Kowall
60 Byberry Road
Huntington Valley, PA 19006

A: Philadelphia, Portrait of an American City by Wdwin Wolf 2nd, Stackpole Books, 1975, has a picture of Lubin's movie studio at Twentieth and Indiana Avenue and a reference to an earlier book, Writing the Photoplay, Esenwein & Leeds, 1913, from which the Lubin material was taken. How about it, Nancy Bergh and you other song slide collectors? Can you give Ms. Kowall and Mr. Eckhardt any help?